

RainCastle

HOW TO WRITE GREAT WEB COPY:

Your 3-Step Guide to Creating Effective Copy





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A breath of fresh air or something best cut with a knife,
which describes your website's copy?

If it's trending toward the latter or might, given a little time,
then this eBook is for you.

We've put together a list of web copywriting best practices
and tips on how to get started. Follow these, and the end
result will be a website that effectively conveys your story
in a concise, clear and compelling way.

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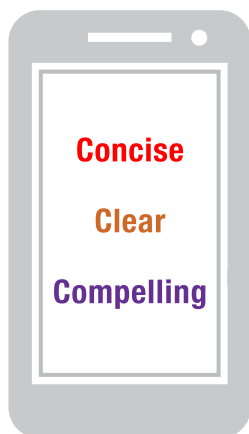
Getting Started With The “Three Cs”

The fact is that people are spending less and less time actually reading web copy. The attention of a goldfish is said to be nine seconds, that’s one more second than the average visitor spends on a website!

If the need for brevity on the web is the only thing you learn from this eBook, it will have been time well spent.



The Three Cs of Effective Web Copywriting



Whether you’re utilizing marketing staff at your business or have hired a freelance copywriter, maintaining a common voice that stems from the three Cs will help you create effective web content that your readers will appreciate.

Be concise

- Less is more—keep content brief
- Avoid long paragraphs and organize copy in easily digestible bits

- Make pages “scannable”—use subheads and bullets when appropriate to make the content more attractive to the reader’s eye
- Minimize scrolling—link to pages or downloadable PDFs for more detailed info
- But use links sparingly in copy and consider placing links to related topics in a sidebar instead. Who wants to read a paragraph where practically every other word is a link to some other “valuable? content”

Be clear

- Be direct—get to the point early
- Avoid run-on sentences and keep one idea per sentence
- Eliminate extraneous words and phrases
- Avoid technical jargon or acronyms that might be foreign to a reader
- Avoid making the assumption that your audience is 100% buzzword compatible. Speak like you would to your mother (Yes I’m making assumptions here).

Be compelling

- Put the most important information first
- Engage the reader by writing from his/her point of view—what is most interesting/ important to him/her? Think like a storyteller, use anecdotes or examples, when appropriate
- Think of your site as a story that unfolds as the page scrolls or the visitor moves into the interior pages. Be informative—avoid “fluff” and use facts whenever possible
- Use active verbs and avoid the passive voice

2

The Five Guidelines of Writing for the Web

Now that we've examined the "three Cs" – be clear, concise, and compelling – let's apply them to real web copy.

By concentrating on these five guidelines for web writing you will see how the right styling of form and function significantly improves the reader experience.

1. Focus on powerful ideas



Think like a journalist and don't bury the lead. Consumers are looking for what sets a company apart, so focusing on your goals and the ideas that drive you will show confidence.

Before: "For over five years, our company has been bringing together directors of some of the largest corporations..."

After: "The power to increase trust in capital markets lies with corporate directors. Our company brings leaders together..."

2. Emphasize impact



Concentrate on concrete examples of your work that highlight progress.

Before: “We bring together a premier group of leaders who are committed to addressing the goals of improving patient health outcomes as well as the climate for innovation within the constraints of pressures to control healthcare costs.”

After: “Improving patient outcomes. Encouraging healthcare innovation. Containing costs. Through our company, healthcare leaders are working together to address some to the most pressing societal issues of our time.”

3. Use active voice, not passive



Using active voice creates more power in the text, as it grants the reader the feeling of action. It generates immediacy, a sense of now, and positions you as an active leader in your field.

Before: “Over 200 directors from Fortune 500 and equivalent companies have participated in private meetings...”

After: “We produce private meetings that bring together more than 200 directors from Fortune 500 companies...”

4. Avoid language with an expiration date



In terms of updating the copy on the site, it's best to avoid using language that dates the content. If it's absolutely necessary to include timeline information, be sure to make it a concrete start or end point instead of using vague language.

Before: “Over the past few years, our company has built...”

After: “Since launching in 2001, our company has built...”

5. Avoid overused words



Remember your motivation and stay on track with your marketing. Using “popular” or overused terms will do nothing but bog down the copy and cause the reader to skim past your messaging. It also can come across as amateur and lazy.

Before: “Our premier company provides unique insight and exclusive solutions...”

After: “Our networking services will enable...”

These examples are born out of the “three Cs,” and will help you to create focused content that is accessible to the reader, whose attention you only have seconds to capture.

3

Writing to Your Audience

After examining parts 1 and 2, it's time to concentrate on addressing the right people.

The first step in finding your followers, is to ask some key questions:

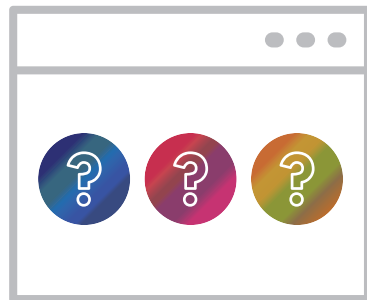
What is the mission of your website?

Examine your company's mission and branding and how they are supported by the website: what do you want to accomplish with your site?

Here are some possibilities:

- **Exciting visitors** about your mission, approach, and impact
- **Informing visitors** about your story, expertise, activities, achievements and problems you solve
- **Inspiring visitors** to explore the ways they can participate, contribute, and benefit
- **Attracting visitors** to your services
- **Educating visitors** with your thought leadership content

You want them to think and act, and come away with a basic understanding of your company and it's mission.



Who are your audiences?

Before you sit down to crank out what is sure to be fantastic website copy after this 3-part series, you need to identify the types of people who will visit your site. These could be:



- **Potential clients/customers**
- **Prospective team members**
- **Industry professionals**
- **Investors or board members**

Do a little research and check your web analytics to see the kinds of people coming to your site, what pages they're visiting most, how long they stay on the site and the bounce rate of each page. These will give you a general idea of what kind of content they're looking for and who they are, which will enable you to tailor your writing to them. Which leads us to...

What do your audiences want?

Understanding your audiences' motivation will give you insight on how to approach them. Consider:



- **What motivates them?**
- **Why should they care?**
- **What are their “pain points?”**
- **What will they gain?**

Think about why you visit certain websites and what you hope to take away from them, and then pair this knowledge with the website traffic research you've done and look for the consistencies. Then, consider what do they want in relation to...

What do you want them to do?

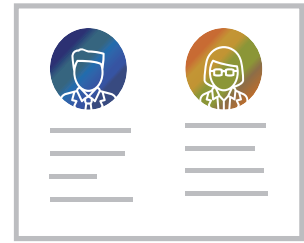


The ultimate goal of your website: aligning your site with what your audience needs. Do they need content offers? A product tour? A part number? Education? A person to speak with? Thought leadership content? Your writing should build on a consistent theme of action; if you are not actively trying to engage your visitors with compelling content, you run the risk of it serving only as a brochure.

Taking these steps will help you create content that is aimed at providing for your audience. However, it is always important to remember that while the visitor's actions may be fairly consistent, you should always:

Speak to one person.

The diversity of readers is often overlooked when it comes to marketing copy. There is no “one size fits all” approach, and writing copy that implies a generic reader will be of little value. When writing, make sure to address this by tailoring your voice to the individual. If you need to speak to multiple audiences, create “Buyer Personas,” which provide a deeper understanding of our targets; what they look like, what they like and dislike, what motivates them, what their challenges may be, where they congregate, what they read and who they associate with on a regular basis. To learn more about Buyer Personas, visit the RainCastle blog.

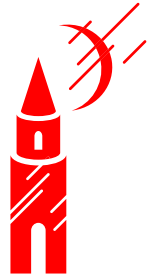


So go forth with quality content, tailored messaging, sharp writing and an eye for the individual, and create fantastic copy for your website!

To learn more about how RainCastle can help you with your website, branding and lead generation needs:

Please call us at 617.965.2681 x225

Visit our website at www.raincastle.com View our blog at <http://blog.raincastle.com>



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